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"I have heard that your health [has not been good] . . . and it is my earnest hope that you may get back your health. I shall never forget nor cease to appreciate the encouragement you gave me when I was losing my health rapidly, and your promise to pray for me so that my health might be restored back to me.[6] I sincerely believe that your prayer was heard, as my health seems to be improving, even in my advancing age.

"So now it is my turn to pray that your life span may be extended, and among other good things to which you apply your mind that you may further contribute to the great study of the races and peoples of the earth.

"I have told you in my story of the Gros Ventres before the days of the white man, which includes the belief of my ancestors, that in the spring of the year is when one's prayers are more readily heard, and that was the time that the Indians in the long ago went to the hills, streams and mountain tops to fast and pray.

"We, the Gros Ventres, pray and implore the Supreme Being to protect our boys fighting on the various fronts in this great war, and so far only one Gros Ventre boy has been killed, out of many who are in the service. And we also pray that this terrible war and this mass killing may soon stop and that a just and lasting peace may be declared, so that the great family of nations may be true brothers again and go on with life in harmony and prosperity.

. . .

"I will now close and I am very glad to have spoke to you on this paper and it is my sincere hope that you can feel my words, so that they will do you good and doctor you.[7] With a good and hearty handshake, I am

Your friend
The Boy"

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In the spring, The Boy's father, Lame Bull, would at bedtime after all were lying down, sing certain songs after first praying for himself, his household and all the people. Whether this bedtime

[6] See p. 366, in references to The Boy's illness in 1940. In 1948, The Boy again mentioned gratefully Cooper's prayer for him. [R.F.]

[7] Some of the expressions used in this letter seem to be implicit references to the efficacy of the sincere wish as well as of prayer.

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praying and singing were done at other seasons of the year and how far as a more general custom by other fathers of families were points we did not clear up.

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Before eating food, at least in any more or less formal gathering, a portion of the food was offered up with prayer.

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Prayer rites and observances for good hunting were few and simple—as compared, for example, with the numerous and complicated ones practiced by the Algonquian-speaking tribes of the taiga. Abundance of food, which principally meant game food, was commonly prayed for. Two of the Sacred Dances, the Law Enforcers' and the Woman's, had as a purpose success in buffalo hunting. But beyond this, hunting entered little into ritual, and we may recall hunting was conspicuously absent from the power quest. We recorded no rites or observances whatever in connection with the gathering of berries, roots or other plant food.

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It was customary on crossing rivers to pray to the Last Child for protection, and to throw into the water offerings, especially shells and eagle-tail feathers, for the Last Child, or the water monster, or both, with some words such as, "I give you this." Sometimes, too, some prayer and offering would be made by a person going to swim, or on other occasions of water hazard.

During or just before severe thunderstorms, various prayer and other procedures were resorted to, many of them directed to Bha'a, the storm being.

Seeking indirectly or asking directly the prayers of the aged, especially for long life, took several different forms, and played an important role in Gros Ventre life, as we have explained elsewhere.

There were many different ways of seeking the prayers of the aged. We recorded the following, which may or may not exhaust the list: crying before a lodge, offering a pipe, promising a sweat-lodge, "holy boiling," providing a feast, doing favors of various kinds.

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"Holy boiling," to which we have not as yet referred, was an observance distinct both from the preceding ones and from feasting a group of aged people. It was intended primarily for some one person, man or woman, although others partook of the meal, and